THE
RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DEDICATED TO THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM AS A RELIGIOUS CIVILIZATION, TO THE UPBUILDING OF ISRAEL'S ANCIENT HOMELAND, AND TO THE FURTHERANCE OF UNIVERSAL FREEDOM, JUSTICE AND PEACE.

Vol. 1. April 17, 1935—Nisan 14, 5695 No. 8

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PUBLISHED BY

THE SOCIETY FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF JUDAISM

15 West 86th Street, New York, N. Y.

ANNOUNCING

THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST

DINNER-SYMPOSIUM

to be held

Monday Evening, May 27, 1935

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THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST is published bi-weekly from September to June by the Society for the Advancement of Judaism, 15 West 86th St., New York, N. Y. Subscription $1.00 a year; foreign $1.25; individual copy 10 cents. Entered as second class matter January 9, 1935, at the Post Office, New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879.

EDITORIALS

The Hebrew University

THE entire Zionist vision from its very inception has been one of romantic idealism. But nowhere did its spiritual boldness exhibit itself so clearly as in the project, suggested in the very earliest days of Zionism, of a Hebrew University to be established in the Jewish homeland. Practically considered, this very notion was insanely unrealistic. When it was conceived the land was not yet in Jewish hands. Such settlements as existed struggled against almost insuperable physical obstacles. The project was such as could have been launched apparently only by impractical visionaries. And yet, on April second last Jewry throughout the world celebrated the tenth anniversary of the successful establishment of a Hebrew University in Palestine—another demonstration of the power of an ideal to realize itself in the face of material difficulties.

For the impulse toward a Hebrew University was not a vagary. It was a logical expression of what was essential in Jewish aspiration. The Zionist, striving to rebuild Jewish life, knew that Jewish existence was inconceivable without that Jewish learning which had always characterized it. He felt that in Palestine he could establish a cultural center for world Jewry, that a cultural center required an institution for the preservation and enrichment of the Jewish heritage. He hoped Palestine would do more than rebuild Judaism, that it would enable Judaism to make a distinct Jewish contribution to the world. And he felt that Palestine might serve a useful purpose in bridging the gap between the East and the West.

Ten years ago this unrealistic, impractical project took on body at the dedication of the Hebrew University. A decade is a very short time, but during that brief period the University has become an actuality and has set out boldly to realize the ideals of its founders. Like all valid ideals it has demonstrated its worth when translated into reality. The Hebrew University has been a great stimulant to Jewish learning. It has become a cultural center for world Jewry, it is making a positive contribution to human culture. In addition, it has developed a tragic utility in offering a haven of refuge for victims of persecution, for scholars and students who are denied in the lands of their former residence opportunity to teach or learn.

The University today is a firmly fixed element in the Jewish scene. That does not mean that it does not have its problems. It has by no means met with the financial support which it deserves. The indifference of Jewry, especially Jews

of wealth, has compelled that institution to struggle along on inadequate and uncertain budgets. Furthermore, the University itself is torn between two ideals —that of immediate practical service to the *Yishub* in Palestine and that of an academic institution akin to the great institutions of learning of the Western world. The Jewish population in Palestine, the friends of the University in the disapora and its administrators hesitate between these two goals. All these difficulties, it is to be hoped, will be solved as time goes on. There is no reason, given the adequate assistance of world Jewry, why the Hebrew University cannot fulfill both objectives, that of ministering to the needs of Palestinian Jewry and also that of maintaining a high standard of academic activity.

The world today has grown dark for Jews. Few indeed are the elements that give hope and courage for the Jewish future. But through all the murkiness a light shines from Mount Scopus, offering promise of a renascence of Jewish culture, assurance that the Jewish genius may yet give to mankind another contribution. The ancient hope of a rebuilt Temple has been transformed into the actuality of an institution of learning which shall serve as a light to the nations and from which the Law will some day go forth.

Haim Zhitlowski at Seventy

THE celebration of the seventieth birthday of Haim Zhitlowski should bring the name of that significant man to the attention of thousands of American Jews who do not know it as well as they should. For Zhitlowski is one of the few personalities in present day Jewish life whose ideas and writings have influenced large masses of Jewry.

Zhitlowski proceeded, in his philosophy, from the premise that the Jews constitute a nation by virtue of their culture. For him identification with the Jewish people should be independent of personal religion or creed. The "special creative forms, the peculiar national, spiritual and bodily type, which are transmitted from generation to generation" comprise the essence of Jewishness. Thus far he shared with many others a concept that developed during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and has persisted in various forms to our own day.

But where Zhitlowski diverged was in his insistence that hereafter the Yiddish language and Yiddish culture were to be the bases for the national life. He sincerely believed that Hebrew had no future and that Yiddish, the spoken tongue of the masses, would and should supplant it. Already he saw in the literary achievements of the Yiddish writers of his day the manifestations of a new folk literature and art; he saw a new Jewish folk life in the making.

His Yiddish nationalism was enriched by his socialist ideals. Already at the age of twenty-three he was forced to leave his native Russia and flee to Switzerland on account of his revolutionary activities. But unlike the Socialist-Zionists who sought to establish the cooperative commonwealth in Palestine, Zhitlowski believed in fighting out the economic battle in whatever land one happened to be. Jews should not escape to Palestine for economic justice. The problem, he felt, was a universal one, and Jews would not be serving the cause of socialism by segregation. Neither would they be advancing the cause of Jewish life, for a nation is its culture, not its land, and the Jewish nation requires no land of its own.

The Russian pogroms of the eighties, however, disillusioned him. He realized then that culture demands a soil, an environment, and that a group, to survive as a group, must have group autonomy. He now understood that unless a people can determine its own destiny, no real cultural or national life can thrive. Still reluctant to "escape", he followed the logic of his position and developed the theory of minority rights. Janow-

sky in his "Jews and Minority Rights" has shown to what extent the postwar status of certain European Jewries was affected by Zhitlowski's philosophy. Incorporated into the covenant of the League of Nations, the minority rights clause has indeed been more honored in the breach than in the observance. But all credit is due Zhitlowski for his realization that only through integrated group life can a culture and a civilization survive and create.

Since 1906 Zhitlowski has made his home in this country where Yiddishism has become a vital movement. It may indeed be said that the Yiddishists here are the only group whose philosophy of Jewishness pervades every aspect of their lives. Although the political objectives of Yiddish nationalism have not been pursued, the cultural life has been lived more strenuously by this group than by any other Jewish group which regards culture as the badge of its identity.

It would not be gracious of us to expound here the reasons why Yiddish nationalism cannot be regarded by THE RECONSTRUCTIONIST as an adequate interpretation of Judaism upon which to rebuild Jewish life in America. We wish only to congratulate Haim Zhitlowski upon the completion of seventy years of a highly creative and influential life.

"The Road of Promise"

THE sponsors of that colorful pageant "The Romance of a People," encouraged by the widespread enthusiasm with which it was received by American Jews, are about to launch an even more ambitious undertaking. The problem of creating a drama that would portray the entire history of Israel's spiritual struggle led them to seek out the ablest representatives of the literary, dramatic and musical arts. They have reason to hope that with the extraordinary talent which they have succeeded in attracting to the performance of the task they will approach histrionic perfection.

The project was entrusted to Max Reinhardt, the master of directors, who in turn interested Franz Werfel in writing a play which would set forth the quintessence of Israel's career in dramatic form. The play has been written, and translated into English by Ludwig Lewisohn. With compelling power it reveals Israel's commitment to a destiny which it cannot escape, a destiny which is not the capricious whim of a blind fate but a part of a divinely ordained pattern of history. Music which rises to the heights of this play's exalted concept has been composed by Kurt Weill. Those who have been privileged to read the text of the play and examine the score of the music have testified to their matchless beauty and overwhelming emotional power. Both Werfel and Weill consider this monumental work, which will be called "The Road of Promise," the climactic effort of their careers for the writing of it has given them an opportunity to satisfy their profound yearning to give vent to that aspect of their being which recent events have called into painful consciousness.

The problem now is to find a group of patrons to finance this undertaking. Those of our people who are in a position to do so should give the production of this mighty drama moral and material support, for Jewish life has need of such a work of art. We need the renewed energy of soul that can come from the realization that out of the chaos of hatred and madness and bigotry there can emerge the bold and confident voices reaffirming their faith in the rationality and purposefulness of life, voices that are not merely the voices of individual men responding to the realities of their own experience but voices by which the soul of a people becomes articulate.

We have need for such a production to reveal to open minded non-Jews something of the inwardness of the Jewish

spirit to help them to understand us better. And we need it to help interpret Jews to themselves. Our younger generation, bored by the didactic instruction of the Sunday school to the point of prejudice against their own people, can have no appreciation of Israel's remarkable story. Such a play would leave an indelible impression upon them; they would never forget after such a performance the message that it brings. From whatever standpoint this herculean effort richly deserves the generous outpouring of cooperation which works of real merit have always been able to evoke from our people.

Latent Forces in Our Youth

THE vital importance of a vigorous Jewish youth movement in America has long been recognized by those concerned with the future of Jewish life in this country. Sporadic efforts have been made to meet the need, but for one reason or another they have generally not persevered. It is to the credit of Young Judaea that it was able to face the changing conditions of these past twenty-five years and to remain faithful to its original program, continuing increasingly to draw into its clubs thousands of Jewish boys and girls in hundreds of Jewish communities throughout the United States and Canada. The late Professor Israel Friedlaender was their first national president and the results of his leadership, as well as that of Henrietta Szold, of Dr. David de Sola Pool and others have provided Young Judaea with a definite objective and with a distinctive character as a youth organization. Their program covers a double aim: the awakening of a healthy, informed and intelligent Jewish consciousness in American boys and girls of the adolescent ages, thus preparing them for active participation in the civic and Jewish life of America, and secondly, the recognition that Jewish youth has a necessary part to play in the renascence of the Jewish people and in the upbuilding of their ancient homeland.

There are incalculable latent forces that reside in youth, which in the past have been potent influences in the development of peoples. Though possessed of a tradition that places a high value on youth, we Jews have not even begun to tap this great source of strength for our people. On the contrary, our communal leaders busily engaged in every conceivable form of philanthropy have almost universally neglected the elemental needs of the Jewish youth in our various communities. At best they have thought largely in terms of recreation and Jewish association in the activities of Jewish centers. They have yet to display a vital concern for Jewish education and above all for raising the banner of Jewish self-realization around which Jewish youth could rally with all the idealism, the fire and the imagination of their years. When the Zionists gave of their support, moral and financial, to Young Judaea, they assumed a responsibility that must henceforth be spread among a much larger number in the community. It is a mistake to look upon Young Judaea simply as the junior branch of the Zionist Organization. The very leadership of these clubs by hundreds of young men and young women provides the finest possible training ground for ultimate communal leadership in every phase of American life. Scores of outstanding leaders in the Jewish life of America today and even in world Jewish affairs began their first contacts with organized Jewish life in the club meeting of a group.

Need we point to the inevitable tie-up between our destiny and our youth? It is time that what has been expressed so often mainly as a truism should be translated into a wholehearted and full-handed support of youth movements such as Young Judaea, so that the effectiveness of their work is not frustrated and can reach every Jewish boy and girl in the community.

The Organization of World Jewry

By EUGENE KOHN

I

ALL Jews who wish to remain Jews — and we need not take the others into account — want Jewish unity. Whatever they may regard Judaism to be, religion, race or nation, they always imply, in wishing to be Jews, a conscious group relationship without which Judaism would to all intents and purposes cease to be. But though all Jews want Jewish unity, not all are fully aware of the forces which threaten this unity and which have already seriously impaired it. Even those Jews who are aware of these forces do not agree on how to combat or counteract them.

Before the so-called Emancipation, the Jewish community everywhere was segregated to a great extent and possessed a common tradition handed down from a common past. These two circumstances were sufficient to insure immediate understanding and sympathy among Jews throughout the world, and made any Jew at home in any Jewry. A uniform mode of life, identical mores and identical *Weltanschauung* guaranteed the survival of the group and dominated the spiritual life of the individual so completely that he could not help feeling that he owed to the Jewish people whatever meaning life had for him.

It is not so today. Jews are no longer segregated from the rest of mankind and no longer live under the exclusive domination of Jewish culture. Jews have had to accommodate themselves spiritually, politically and economically to living in close relationship with other peoples of different traditions. This has not only divided Jewry along national territorial lines but also along class and caste lines corresponding to the various countries. Each segment of the Jewish people has adopted the ideology, sentiments and loyalties of its own land. But, in spite of these divisions and the breakdown of uniformity of belief and practice among Jews which accompanied these new conditions, Jews are nevertheless aware of a community of interest and still resist the destruction of their collective entity. Jews still want a Jewish family life and generally regard intermarriage with non-Jews, if not as treasonable to the group, at least as undesirable on personal grounds. They still want to worship, if at all, in association with fellow Jews; they still want to transmit to their children some modicum of a Jewish education; they still want to rally to the defense of their fellow Jews whenever the rights of the latter are attacked; and, in a hundred and one other ways they display a sentimental desire for Jewish unity. All of which goes to show that the Jewish people—call it a religious community, a nation, or what you will—behaves like any other social organism that struggles for its existence and for a place in the sun.

But an organism must have organs; its will to survive must be organized. In the old ghettos this will expressed itself through the home, the synagogue, the *heder, bet hamidrash* and *yeshivah,* etc., all of them keeping step, as it were, with one another because all were propelled by the force that resided in their common national tradition. With the Reformist movement, the synagogue itself became exposed to assimilatory influences. Religion became a source of division rather than of union. It still remains such, and to the extent that it is taken seriously by its adherents, it cannot effect unity by compromise. There is no compromising with honest convictions, be they those of a Reformist or an Orthodox Jew.

The only way of effecting unity is for Jews to cooperate with other Jews in all activities in which it is possible for them to do so, through the technique of representative democratic organization.

Some interests almost all Jews share in common. These will necessarily be the major activities of a World Jewish Congress. There are others which scattered groups of Jews may share with one another. All Jewish artists, for example, if they are self-conscious Jews as well as artists, may be presumed to have an interest in promoting Jewish art, that is to say, the artistic expression of Jewish life. Such group interests also a World Jewish Congress should help to organize. The very parties that divide us along religious and politico-social lines seek to maintain contact between individuals of similar conviction in different lands, and even such contacts should be facilitated by a World Jewish Congress provided these organized parties are prepared to respect the similar rights of other party organizations. For the organic unity which the Congress is designed to effect does not demand a suppression of differences. On the contrary, the presence of different points of view contending for mastery is itself an aid to progress and an advantage to a social organism in its continuous adaptation to the changing conditions of life. It is only when parties, because of social disintegration or general intolerance, refuse to meet each other on common ground and to recognize a common interest in the general welfare that they make for schism and the decomposition of the social organism. (One of the best evidences of sound social instinct among the Jews is the fact that they did not permit the difference between Orthodoxy and Reform to express itself—as the difference between Rabbinism and Karaism had done in an earlier age—in mutual excommunications and the denial of the right of intermarriage between their respective advocates, although the actual difference in doctrine and observance between Karaites and Rabbinites was not nearly so fundamental as between Reform and Orthodox Jews).

II

The feasibility of a world-wide Jewish organization on a basis broad enough to cut across local territorial divisions and partisan affiliations has been demonstrated by the Zionist Congress which, in its structure and organization, recognizes both the division of Jews in accordance with the countries in which they reside (representation by *Landsmanschaften*) and their division on ideological grounds (representation by the party federations such as the Poale-Zion, Mizrachi, Revisionists, etc.). Indeed the Zionist Organization represents the first effort to base Jewish unity on the concept of an organic relationship between Jews rather than on an ideological formula or religious dogma. *"Wir sind ein Volk, ein Volk,"* said Theodore Herzl, and the convening of the Zionist Congress was a logical corollary to this proposition.

But if Zionism professes to offer a solution to the Jewish problem on the basis of the organic unity of the Jewish people, the question must be asked: why cannot the Zionist Congress be the World Jewish Congress? Of course, the Zionists are only a minority of the Jews; but do not all ideas find their adherents at the outset among minorities and, in every nation, is it not the minority of the population that is preoccupied with national problems? How much more so in the case of a scattered and diversified people like the Jews. Certainly, any new movement for the creation of a World Jewish Congress would find its practical support among only a minority of the Jewish people. Why then are so many Jews cold to the Zionist movement; why do organized sections of the Jewish people, that feel a concern for the perpetuation of Judaism as they conceive it, nevertheless not feel inclined to express their sense of union with the rest of Jewry by affiliation with the Zionist Organization? Is it that the Zionist Congress has not the potentialities of developing into a World Jewish Congress?

There are two main reasons, one practical, the other theoretic, which tend to prevent the Zionist Organization from

becoming the all-inclusive representative of world-Jewry. The practical reason arises from the necessary preoccupation of Zionism with the central project of establishing the national home in Palestine. The problems involved in this single project are so numerous and so complicated, and it is so important that they be kept free from further embarrassing complication with the problems of the Jewish diaspora, that the movement has either to bungle its Palestinian work or to concentrate upon it to the exclusion of other vital interests affecting the Jewries of the diaspora.

The theoretic obstacle to making the Zionist Congress the central organ of world Jewry is the identification of Zionism with a theory of Jewish nationalism which is not appropriate to the actual situation of the Jewish people, unless the concept of Jewish nationalism be considerably modified to fit the facts. Many leading Zionists have, to be sure, made the necessary modifications in their concept of nationalism and it is quite possible to be a good Zionist, that is to say an advocate of a national home for the Jewish people in Palestine, without subscribing to the general theory that the Jews throughout the world constitute a nation. Nevertheless, the latter view is still entertained by most Zionists and militates against the inclusion in Zionist ranks and hence in the constituency of the Zionist Congress of many elements in Jewry who feel themselves nationally identified with the social and cultural life of the people among whom they live. Though Zionists may stigmatize these Jews as "assimilationists," that does not make them such, for they are no less anxious than the Zionists to see some form of Jewish unity and solidarity maintained. That they have assimilated many ideas from the outside world is undoubtedly true; but the same is true of Zionists. Nationalism itself is a concept derived from the experience of the people among whom we live. I doubt whether one can find in the whole traditional literature of the Jew a word that exactly fits the concept "nationalism" until the word *l'umiyut* was coined to translate it. Jewish nationalism cannot then be made the basic philosophy of Jewish world organization if such an organization is to make room for every Jew who wishes to be identified with the Jewish people.

III

The difference between regarding the Jews as a nation and regarding them under the more general category of a social organism or people may seem so slight as to raise the question *mai nafka minah*, of what practical consequence can the difference be; why should any Jew hesitate to apply the term nation to the Jewish people? There is at stake, however, not merely a matter of definition but a matter of point of view toward the problem of Jewish living in the diaspora which must be faced with candor. What shall be the attitude of Jews not merely toward the politico-legal systems but toward the national cultures of the lands in which they live? Must they consider themselves as aliens and exiles? Extreme and consistent nationalists answer affirmatively. Thus Jakob Klatzkin in his book, *"Probleme des modernen Judentums"* says:

"We are, *vis-a-vis* all territorial nations, national aliens and will rigidly abide in our alien character (*Fremdartigkeit*), that is we will guard our original character (*Eigenart*). Granted that we have forfeited much of our distinctiveness and have found a corresponding attachment to the nationality of the country; granted that we have become naturalized to a great extent in the culture of foreign nations. We look upon this, however, as a curse not as a blessing."

Such a view is consistently nationalistic. In a strict sense, it is perhaps the only attitude toward life in the diaspora that is consistently nationalistic. But to most American Jews and, I believe, to most Jews in western Europe as well,

such a statement sounds like a *reductio ad absurdum* of Jewish nationalism. For it completely overlooks the fact that, even if we should desire—which most of us do not—a complete political and cultural segregation that would shelter the Jewish spirit within invisible ghetto walls, the nations among whom we live could not and would not let us isolate ourselves from the rest of the population. The fact that we have a part in the economic and social structure of the nations among whom we live—and even Klatzkin does not deny us this much contact with the Gentiles—places upon us the moral obligation of sharing sufficiently in their cultural life to insure mutual understanding and cooperation in the civic community of which we are a part. Nor can anybody tell us that we may share this cultural life but must regard it as a curse. Nobody can turn the blessing of an acquaintance with the best thought preserved in English literature, for example, into a curse by mere say-so. Such one-hundred-percentism in Jewish nationalism is as vicious as in any other nationalism. Had Pinsker, Herzl and Ahad Ha-am not been "cursed" with an intimate acquaintance with the national cultures of the western world, Jewish nationalism itself could never have come into existence as an organized movement.

To what extent must we preserve the national elements in Jewish culture in order to maintain the organic unity of Israel? To what extent does the consciousness of Jewish affiliation affect our relations to the non-Jewish world; or the consciousness of our national territorial affiliations affect our Jewish attitudes? These are problems on which there may be divergent views. But no view can be acceptable as a basis for Jewish unity if it ignores the ethical implication of Israel's dispersion among the nations, or the problem of maintaining, even in the diaspora, the unity of the Jewish people and the continuity of Jewish history. For maintaining this unity and continuity, the establishment of the national home in Palestine is important and, indeed, necessary. For, as we have already shown, Judaism in other countries must present a hyphenated culture. American Judaism cannot avoid, need not avoid, indeed, ought not avoid being influenced by the American milieu; it must and should be an American Judaism.

But, in the interest of Jewish unity and continuity, there ought to be some place in the world where an unhyphenated Judaism can exist and can generate those centripetal forces which can counterbalance the centrifugal forces of the diaspora environment. Nobody who is acquainted with the facts of the Jewish situation can look upon the diaspora as a temporary *galut*. It is therefore inconsistent with the conception of Israel as a living organism to regard Zionism as the final solution of the Jewish problem. As long as there is a Jewish people, there will be a Jewish problem, the problem of insuring both the survival of the Jewish people and the progressive development of its civilization on the highest spiritual level attainable. *Zionism may be and, in my opinion, is under existing conditions indispensable to a solution of this problem but it does not itself constitute such a solution. The Zionist Organization cannot assume the function of a World Jewish Congress unless it dissociates itself from a conception of nationalism which leaves out of account the necessity and legitimacy of cultural adaptation to the nations among whom we live; unless it broaden its program to include the problems of the Jewish diaspora as well as of the national home.*

To sum up our discussion of the basis of world Jewish unity: it must be organic rather than ideological; it must conceive of the Jewish people as a historic entity with a character of its own, which will find its fullest and freest expression in the Jewish national home, but which must also impress itself, though in necessarily modified form, on the communal life of Jews everywhere.

Such a view offers a synthesis of Zionist thought with that of those loyal sections of Jewry that have emphasized the need of accommodation to the nations among whom we live. Both Zionists and non-Zionists could find a place for themselves in a Congress that viewed Jewish problems from this point of view. The difference in emphasis would remain, but there would be a sufficiently broad basis of community to make fruitful cooperation possible.

IV

The possible functions of a World Jewish Congress may be considered under two main heads: (1) the organization of activities in which all or nearly all self-conscious Jews are interested and (2) the encouragement of special interests which, while not the active concern of all Jews, are nevertheless an outgrowth of Jewish life and an expression of Jewish consciousness on the part of groups of Jews not confined to one country. Both these classifications may be subdivided.

Under the first head would come (1) the need for combating anti-Semitism and unfair treatment of Jews as Jews, wherever this may manifest itself on a large scale; (2) the relief of Jewish distress wherever it is too great for local agencies to cope with it successfully; (3) the mitigation of the evils of enforced migration, whether under political or economic compulsion; (4) the regulation of all Jewish colonization movements that appeal beyond national boundary lines for manpower or financial support; and (5) the development of the Jewish national home.

Very few, probably, would deny that it is important for a World Jewish Congress to deal with anti-Semitism and related problems. It is the need for handling these problems in an authoritative and disciplined manner that is mainly responsible for the demand for a World Congress of Jews wherever such a demand has been voiced. Nor does it seem likely that there would be much objection to the inclusion of points (2), (3) and (4) within the program of the projected Congress. Point (5), however, would unquestionably be contested because there already exists a world-wide Jewish organization preoccupied with the problem, viz. the World Zionist Organization. At the sessions of the latest Zionist Congress no conclusion could be reached as to the desirability of a World Jewish Congress because of the apprehension that such a Congress might deal with the problem of Zionism and weaken the prestige and authority of the Zionist Organization.

This is understandable and must not be dismissed as a mere exhibition of institutional pride. An organization that has carried the sole responsibility for a great project for many years accumulates in the process a wealth of experience, a point of view to specific problems and a technique for handling them, a trained personnel and a responsive organized constituency. Such an organization cannot be expected to stake all these painfully acquired advantages on the possibility of the success of some new social experiment, however desirous it may be of seeing the experiment succeed. If the development of the Jewish national home is, nevertheless, to be one of the objectives of a World Jewish Congress—as, notwithstanding the considerations mentioned, I am still convinced that it should be—the relations of such a Congress to the World Zionist Organization would constitute one of the major problems of a practical nature that would require adjustment.

But why trouble ourselves with this problem? Would it not be simpler to limit the concern of the World Jewish Congress to the problems of the Jewish diaspora and leave to the Zionist Organization or, more exactly, to the Jewish Agency, the problem of establishing the Jewish national home in Palestine? Such a course would vitiate the whole concept of the organic unity of the Jewish people, which is the one principle on which the whole idea of the World Jew-

ish Congress rests. If Palestine is to be developed as the national home of the Jewish people, the Jewish people as a whole must have a voice in determining its conditions. To exclude participation of a World Jewish Congress in the development of the Jewish national home would be to exclude from the program of the Congress the one comprehensive constructive project which is the common concern of Jews throughout the world, non-Zionists as well as Zionists, and to confine the activities of the Congress to defensive emergency measures or activities of minor import and significance.

Besides, why should the Zionist Organization want a World Jewish Congress to keep its hands off Palestine; why should it not welcome the Congress' participation in the work so long as adequate provisions are made to insure the continuity of fundamental Zionist policy and the utilization of experienced Zionist personnel? The Zionist Organization has for some time realized that it lacked in its own membership adequate social forces to achieve the building of the national home unaided. It has accordingly called into being the enlarged Jewish Agency which includes non-Zionists in its membership. By what logic can it entrust to non-Zionists who represent very limited constituencies a measure of influence in Zionist affairs that it would deny to a democratically representative Congress of world Jewry? When a World Jewish Congress exists, it should logically constitute the Jewish Agency for Palestine. Not only does the concept of a World Jewish Congress imply this, but the concept of the Jewish national home implies it. From the point of view of those who look upon Palestinian colonization as merely a philanthropic project, there might be some justification for entrusting the work to a limited body of Jews, but from the point of view of a nationalist, it is certainly the responsibility of the Jewish people as a whole, acting as an organized social force through duly accredited representatives.

V

Let us turn now to those functions which a World Jewish Congress may perform with respect to specialized Jewish interests that affect different elements of Jewry differently but are shared by considerable numbers of Jews regardless of geographic boundaries. These may again be subdivided into two main classes: (1) those that represent tendencies, policies or programs which their advocates would like to see all Jews accept and which we may call, for want of a better name, "party organizations," and (2) organizations of interests that have no specific ideology but are based on the desire of people similarly qualified for meeting specialized needs to work in association with one another, which we shall call "associations of experts." Under the former group would come the World Zionist Organization with all its ramifications and the religious organizations, like the *Agudat Yisrael,* and the various congregational unions both of liberal and of traditional character. It should be a function of the World Jewish Congress to encourage consultation between Jewish party organizations in different countries wherever there is sufficient similarity of program to warrant hope of effective cooperation. In our religious life, we have long deplored the total lack of standards of religious behavior in the ranks of our liberals and the reactionary intransigence of Orthodox Jews in refusing even to employ such authority as their rabbis could assert, in strict accord with traditional juridic procedures, to bringing Jewish law into better harmony with the needs of modern life in its social and ethical as well as its ritual and ceremonial aspects. Orthodox Jews frequently contend that if there were an authoritative Sanhedrin, it could, within the framework of the Jewish legal system, make adequate provision for all necessary change. A World Jewish Congress could facilitate the convoking of such an as-

sembly, representative of Orthodox Jews throughout the world, for the establishment of some such central authority. Such an authority, to be sure, would be unable to impose its will on the un-Orthodox element but it could be instrumental in remedying many an injustice in Jewish law as it functions at present and in giving a new impetus to the study and development of the *halakhic* tradition.

The liberal and conservative religionists might similarly associate themselves with like-minded Jews in other countries, thus assuring that, whatever innovations they feel called upon to introduce in Jewish traditional belief or observance, would be introduced for more important considerations than the expediencies of a purely local situation. It is extremely doubtful whether there will ever again be a uniformity of religious belief and practice similar to what existed before the Emancipation. But the present anarchy could be greatly reduced by common discussion among like-minded groups throughout the world; and the mutual contacts brought about by the association of all these groups in the work of the World Jewish Congress would emphasize many a common interest that is now obscured by the simple fact that Jews of radically different points of view rarely meet. Similarly, Jews with specific social programs which they would like to make operative within the frame-work of Jewish community living, both in the diaspora and in Palestine, should be afforded the fullest opportunity for organized cooperation in and through the World Jewish Congress.

Associations of experts that a World Jewish Congress might organize and utilize in the service of world Jewry might include, among others, the following: (1) a department for promoting the study, use and development of the Hebrew language as the indispensable instrument of spiritual communion between Jews in all places and ages: (2) a statistical department for Jewish demography; (3) a department of health to study diseases to which Jews are particularly exposed, their origin and cure; (4) a department of philanthropic and social service and (5) a department for the encouragement of the arts as media of Jewish self-expression. The list is by no means exhaustive but merely indicates the variety of ways in which a World Jewish Congress might utilize special talents and abilities among Jews for the common welfare of the Jewish people.

VI

How would the recognition of these functions as appropriate to a World Jewish Congress affect the form of its organization? The organization would have to be as democratic and representative as we can possibly make it. We dare make this assertion even at a time when parliamentary democracy has been challenged as never before, because no other policy is conceivable. The other alternatives to democratic procedure, adopted by many of the European states, all imply the exercise of military and economic force which the Jewish people has not at its disposal. Only the pressure of public opinion and voluntary cooperation based on it are the forces on which we can count. There is not even for Jewry the precedent of yielding to hierarchical authority such as exists in the Catholic Church. That surrender of individualism which is necessary for disciplined action can be expected of the Jew only if he himself is part of the authority that demands such discipline. Some machinery would have to be set up by which every individual Jew who wishes to count himself among the Jewish people would have a suffrage in the election of delegates to the Congress.

We must not imagine, however, that the mere setting up of such machinery would in itself insure democratic representation, in the sense that the personnel of the Congress would thereby be representative of the same cast of opinion as the electorate of the Con-

gress. Territorial representation according to which Jews residing within prescribed geographical limits would elect representatives of their own choosing could at best insure that the majority of the population within those limits would have its views on public policy represented. Our conception, however, of Israel as a social organism must bring with it a recognition of the importance of minority opinions; else there is no possibility of progressive adaptation to changing conditions. For such adaptation involves the critical revaluation of old attitudes; and new ideas always originate with minorities. Democracy demands, therefore, the fullest possible freedom of expression for unpopular policies. To facilitate this, party representation as well as territorial representation must be provided for. This two-fold system of representation, for which—as I have pointed out—we have a precedent in the Zionist Organization, would enable the Congress not only to express the united will of the Jewish people where unanimity of sentiment exists, but also to explore possibilities of joint action, effect compromises and secure voluntary subordination of partisan interests in many cases where unanimity does not exist. This will have the effect of securing unity of action without sacrificing freedom of thought and discussion. In fact, discussion will be encouraged since the various tendencies would have to meet the challenge of opposing views in a public arena.

The Congress would also have to be effectively organized for establishing cooperation among the groups of experts to which we have referred. Unlike the parties, these groups would not require special representation. They would normally function as permanent commissions of the Congress with, perhaps, special bureaus at their disposal, similar to the commissions of the League of Nations, many of which, especially those on narcotics, the white slave traffic, the suppression of slavery, etc., have made notable contributions to human welfare. The quiet cooperation of the men on these commissions devoted to constructive tasks, working in an atmosphere free from politics will in the long run probably do more for achieving a spiritual unity among our people in spite of the diversity of the conditions under which we live, than even the more flamboyant part of the Congress' program.

This, of course, does not begin to answer the question as to how the Congress should be organized. Our discussion merely points out the most important of the organizational implications of that view of the Congress' functions which follows from its conception as the central organ of the Jewish social organism. It does not touch upon the whole question of the various obstacles in the way of the organization of a World Jewish Congress. We have not discussed the need for liquidating the work of existing organizations which the Congress would supersede, the prejudices and rivalries, often of a personal nature, that bedevil efforts at cooperation, the difficult problem of finance and any number of other important considerations. It would be presumption even to attempt to answer these questions without much elaborate and costly research. And even such research would be most inconclusive. For a social project such as this cannot be elaborated in the study room. Its very projection must be the work of a conference not of an individual. Prior to the holding of such a conference, all that can be done is to consider some of the theoretic aspects of the problem which those who may subsequently engage in it should not lose sight of, in the maze of detailed work that would lie before them.

VII

Is the project of a World Jewish Congress such as we have outlined feasible? Probably the nearest approach to

an answer that one can give to this question is that which Herzl gave to the same question with regard to Zionism: *"Wenn ihr es wollt, ist es kein Märchen."* It depends on whether the Jewish people can be made to grasp the significance of a World Jewish Congress, to let it fire their imagination and to exert themselves to achieve it. The picture we have drawn may seem utopian in its ignoring of obstacles and difficulties. We have, however, no illusions either as to the ease with which a World Jewish Congress can be achieved or as to the accuracy with which our picture of it foreshadows its probable development. If there will ever be a World Jewish Congress which corresponds at all to the ideal which we have proposed, it will be the work of decades, perhaps of generations. The beginnings of it will probably have to be modest and include in its initial program only a small fraction of the ultimate purposes that the Congress should eventually serve. But we derive a certain confidence from the very gravity of the situation. The impossibility of indefinitely maintaining the unity of Jewish life and the continuity of Jewish history for the diaspora as well as Palestine without a centralizing and unifying agency makes the establishment of a World Jewish Congress a problem of "To be or not to be." The Jewish people manifestly wishes to be. When the logic of circumstance forces upon it the conclusion that in order to be it must be organized, the Jewish people will probably convert the wish into will and the World Jewish Congress will not remain a mere fancy.

BOOK REVIEW

World Religions Compare Notes

MODERN TRENDS IN WORLD-RELIGIONS, edited by A. Eustace Haydon, University of Chicago Press, 1934.

DURING the summer of 1933 a group of eminent scholars assembled at the University of Chicago under the auspices of the Haskell Foundation to interpret the nature of the adjustments of the world's leading religions to the changed facts of present day civilization. There were spokesmen for Judaism and Christianity, as well as for Islam, Buddhism, Confucianism and Hinduism. The present volume has made their addresses available to the general public, together with an introduction by Eustace Haydon. The project was ambitious enough but the outcome falls far short of its goal.

The spokesmen for the Oriental religions seem to have missed the point of their tasks entirely. Instead of charting the relations of modernism to their religions, they have presented general discourses on the relations of Western to Oriental civilizations. Thus, Martin Sprengling, in writing on "Islam and Modern Scientific Thinking" cites among other things the wonderful achievements of Ibn Saud whose "tireless energy and judicious wisdom is introducing at a hitherto unheard of pace automobiles, tanks . . . modern quarantine . . . artesian wells for irrigation, modern negotiations . . . " K. Natarajan, in dealing with "Hinduism and Modern Social-Economic problems," gives a cursory picture of India's tariff laws, her village economy, her system of family aid for the unemployed instead of the dole, and the recent clamor for legislation to protect labor (with which, incidentally, he is not in full sympathy). These pages are furthermore marred by a distinct tendency toward apologetics. A picture of what modernism is doing to the indigenous religions of the Orient is indeed a great desideratum for the student of comparative religion, but this book does not supply it.

The discussions on Christianity and

Judaism are on a decidedly superior level. The papers of E. S. Ames and W. E. Hocking are useful for their analyses of modern trends in the Christian church and their general characterization of religion as the quest of human nature, for life's values may be applied with equal validity to other religions as well. Dr. M. M. Kaplan's two papers give a very brief critique of present day tendencies in Jewish life, and indicate in broad outline the implications of his position that Judaism is more than a religion—a civilization.

The weakest papers, both on Judaism and Christianity, are those dealing with the challenge of the present day social and economic scene. Alva W. Taylor writes with much feeling about the evils of human exploitation and war. But what is the church going to do about it? He points to the social creed of the Federal Council of Churches and the encyclical of the Pope which are to him as prophetic as the teachings of a Jeremiah or an Isaiah. These pronouncements, he trusts, will eventually move society to social reform, just as in the past Christian principles brought about the emancipation of women, and of slaves, a redemption of childhood to freedom . . . (and) the inauguration of democracy . . . " This is of course totally unrealistic. The social reforms cited were certainly not the outcome of Christian endeavor as such. In many instances they were achieved in the face of opposition from the Christian church. According to Mr. Taylor's way of reasoning, the Church of Soviet Russia, if it cared to, might claim for itself the credit for the October revolution! Social reforms come about because a shift in the balance of social forces pushes the group championing these reforms into ascendency. There are men championing social reform today, but Mr. Taylor has not indicated what help, if any, organized Christianity is giving them in their struggle.

The relation of Judaism to current social and economic problems is discussed in the papers of Professor Cronbach and Rabbi Solomon Goldman. Professor Cronbach's paper is totally inadequate. He is actually naive enough to remark that "the chief obstacle to economic betterment is not greed. The real impediment is our emotional twist, our complexes, our repressions, our fixations, our infantile reaction patterns, our deceptive mental associations. . . . Any religious process which brings serenity to the soul and poise to the mind is a remedy for such warpings. . . . " Rabbi Goldman's paper is polished, witty, brilliant, but it does not deal constructively with our problem. Judaism, he insists, must abandon every vestige of other-worldliness. It must become a purely humanistic religion, helping man to realize his age-old quest for a more abundant life through his own efforts. Judaism must help its adherents build the Great Society, by which Rabbi Goldman probably means a social order where poverty and war have been eliminated. Granted. But how is that to be done? Rabbi Goldman merely repeats his general imperatives without indicating any specific technique of action by which they might be implemented.

The Haskell Foundation was originally established with the hope that it would stimulate better understanding and good-will among the different racial and religious groups. In bringing these representatives of the world's great religions into mutual association the Foundation has doubtless advanced the spirit of good-will. But from the standpoint of a permanent contribution to the understanding of modern trends in the world's religions the results, with some notable exceptions, must be dismissed as insignificant.

BEN ZION BOKSER.